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Our Community ♦ Our Voice ♦ Our Youth

September 16, 2013

The Honorable Nirupama Rao
Ambassador
Embassy of India
2107 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ambassador Rao,

On behalf of the Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA), I am writing concerning the Indian government's new procedures for issuing visas to U.S. passport holders who were born in Iran. PAAIA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that serves the domestic interests of Iranian Americans and represents the community before U.S. policymakers and the American public at large.

Over the past several weeks, PAAIA has been contacted by a number of individuals from the San Francisco Bay Area who are experiencing significant delays in their applications for visas to travel to India. These professionals work in the high-tech industry and are required to travel to India for business-related purposes. They have been informed by the Consulate General of India in San Francisco that there are new procedures for Iranian born citizens of the United States and that their applications may take as long as 7 to 9 months to process.

If this is accurate, the new visa procedures are bound to adversely impact companies that are doing business in India. According to information obtained by PAAIA, the companies that are experiencing delays in visas for their employees include, but are not limited to, Cisco Systems, Ikanos, Salesforce.com, and Texas Instruments. Furthermore, the new restrictions penalize an entire group of U.S. citizens, placing those born in Iran at a disadvantage relative to their non-Persian colleagues. This could lead to hiring disadvantages for prospective employees.

The United States is host to the largest expatriate community of Iranians in the world. Iranian Americans have contributed greatly to the economic strength of America, and are among the most educated and affluent ethnic groups in the U.S. They have founded and/or held senior leadership positions in many major US companies, including many telecommunication and high-tech companies such as AT&T, E-Bay, Google, Intel, and Motorola.

As a representative of the Iranian American community, we are respectfully seeking clarification from your office in regards to policies and procedures for the issuance of visas to U.S. passport holders who were born in Iran. We are confident that it is not the intent or goal of the government of India to disrupt business activities of U.S. based high-tech companies, nor single out a group of U.S. citizens for additional scrutiny that may lead to extra ordinary delays solely because of their national origin.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our concerns. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Respectfully Yours,

Saghi Modjtabai
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable John Kerry, U.S. Secretary of State